

29 October 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: On-Going Historical Program

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1. The Support Services Historical Board met on 28 October 1971 to discuss the approach the Support Directorate should take to sustaining an on-going historical program. Present were

Support Services Historical Officer.

2. I described the purpose of the meeting as being to develop a response to the memorandum the Executive Director-Comptroller had addressed to the Deputies 1 October 1971 (DD/S 71-3838). We are expected not only to present an outline and a schedule for its completion but plan the resources that will be made available to write the histories.

3. There was general agreement that the various methods of allocating resources to write histories during the catching-up phase was unsatisfactory. The use of unqualified historians; the assignment of history as an additional duty; the assignment of people a short time before their retirement; and the use of contract annuitants are all unsatisfactory methods. They are time consuming, costly, and frequently result in unsatisfactory products which have to be redone. The group agreed that the on-going history program should be sustained by assigning professional historians to the Agency Historical Staff and making them responsible for the research and writing of histories. The Security member said that he and the Director of Security felt that histories relating to functions which are the responsibility of the Office of Security could best be done by Security careerists. There was some discussion of this point with the majority view seeming to support the notion that the most objective and professional quality history could be written by professional historians who are full time staff employees of the Agency.

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4. In discussing the approach to the on-going program the idea was offered that documents which have historical significance should be identified day to day from current operations with copies of them diverted to a special historical file. Such a file would then become the primary research source for the historical writer. Two or three of those present felt this was a good idea. I agreed that it might have utility but tried to make the point that historians should not superimpose new record-keeping systems upon already existing records management procedures. Acknowledging that most records management programs now are inadequate to cope with the requirements of historical programs I said that what was being suggested is, or is supposed to be, already included in our records management system. That system is supposed to provide for the identification of documents for permanent retention in the Archives and if that were done it would be unnecessary to divert copies into a historical file as suggested. I attempted to make the point that Archives are the research source for historians and that documents selected for permanent retention should be selected in the normal course of developing records schedules. I encouraged all of those present several times to commence working very closely with the records management people in their own offices and the Records Administration Branch of the Support Services Staff to ensure that we modify or develop records systems designed to serve the requirements of all Agency users to the maximum possible extent.

5. The meeting concluded with the agreement that the Security representative would discuss the philosophy and approach to the on-going Historical Program internally again; that the others would furnish me with their proposed outlines or confirmation that what I have already is acceptable to them by 5 November; that the DD/S position should be that assignment of full-time professional historians to the Agency Historical Staff would represent the best approach to maintaining an on-going historical program.



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Chairman, Support Services Historical Board

cc: Each attendee  
C/SSS

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